619
675 "Jumi'at, Marabtiin (plural of Marabit) of the 'Ali Ahmar."
All Marabit tribes of the Western Desert are affiliated as
* [613] clients with Sa'adi tribes. Further, since the tertiary
group of the Marabtiin functions in the same way as that of
the Sa'adi, it is this group which enters into compacts with
Sa'adi tertiary groups. Traditionally, the Marabit group's
[682] main support activity was to share in the payment of the
blood-money with its Sa'adi protector group. In return, the
Marabit group was given land in the protector's territory
and could depend upon them to contribute to any Marabit
[628] blood debt which might come due. Also, it was considered the
[682] duty of the Sa'adi to revenge the death of a member of his
client group since the Marabit "was weak and could not face a
[608] tribe." But there is no attempt to construct fictional kinship
links between Sa'adi and Marabit groups.

[672] In al-Qasr today, contractual relations between Sa'adi
and Marabit are still based upon collective responsibility in
the blood-feud. However, since this traditional means of
conflict control is an extremely rare occurrence, the mutual
obligations of the parties are expressed in different forms.
[648] In any conflict between the Bedouins and the Egyptian govern-
ment, the Marabtiin are expected to support their respective
• [666] Sa'adi groups. In any modern elections which a Sa'adi might
enter, the Marabit is expected to give him his vote. A few
examples will make clear the relationship between the Sa'adi

619 area of the Western Desert. And, according to the Governor
675 of the province, it is the 'Aishaibat of al-Qasr who are the
578 most powerful of the three primary segments of the 'Ali Ahmar; for example, they have succeeded in sending their 'umda (chief) to the National Assembly in Cairo. In fact, it was over the
[666] election of the 'umda in 1964 that the split between the Marabit Qit'an and the Sa'adi Ali Ahmar became an open one and produced political rumblings among the tribes. This case makes explicit the relationship between the two types of tribes in the Western Desert, and gives an important instance of the operation of structural principles in defining groups and group relations.

619 During the national elections of 1964, it was the
675 traditional duty of the Marabit to vote for his affiliated
666 Sa'adi candidate. Since the Qit'an are allied in a client-
578 protector relationship with the Ali Ahmar, all of the Marabtiin of this tribe should have given their votes to the 'umda of the 'Aishaibat who was seeking office to the National Assembly. But, instead, the Qit'an ran a candidate of their own--largely at the urging of the Governor, it is said. But, despite this Marabit opposition, the 'Aishaibat were successful in getting their 'umda elected. Furthermore,
619 the 'Aishaibat said that this rebellion of the Marabtiin
675 could not go unpunished, that reprisals would be taken. The
578 type of sanction which the 'Aishaibat directed against the
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*613 of lineage segmentation, ties based upon any of the structural principles may obtain, but they are not ritually legitimated by the principle of blood responsibility. A functional corporate group cannot be defined beyond the secondary level. The Bedouins of al-Qasr make an explicit distinction between a group which is 'asaba and one which is not. The term 'asaba derives from the verb, "to bind," and is translated as "paternal relations" or "agnates." The tertiary and secondary segments are considered to be 'asaba. Only these segments can be represented by an 'aqila.

•[666] The 'aqila, the focus of authority in the corporate
*613 tertiary group, is an elected head. The concept of 'aqila
196 is itself an expression which entails mutual support and
174 collective responsibility: the concept of 'aqila is equiva-
682 lent to that of corporate group. Wehr (1961) translates the word 'aqila as "a clan committed by unwritten law of the Bedouins to pay bloodwite for each of its members." In pre-Islamic Arabia, the 'aqila must have been "the juristic personality" (Weber 1954:157). In early Islamic Arabia, we know the penal codes of the ancient schools of law came to differentiate between the offender (i.e. the individual) and the 'aqila (i.e. the group) concerning the payment of blood-money. During Umayyad times, the 'aqila was the group listed on the diwaan (account books), and was considered a tribal grouping of some order which was responsible for paying the diiya

*613 682 578 feuds or war, secondary groups, and even whole tribes, became involved. If the tertiary group is in the structural sense a blood-revenge group, the 'aqila is the corporate sole of the *613 554 682 578 blood-revenge corporation: an important function of the 'aqila's office derives from this. The 'aqila is responsible for the collection and distribution of the blood-money. It is this specific authoritative function of the office which is the necessary condition for the existence of a corporate group. If there is no 'aqila to collect blood-money, then a kinship segment is not a corporation and it will merge into another group headed by an 'aqila in order to realize collective benefits.

*613 554 Bait Braik of 'Ailit Ma'fas (see Figure 8) had no 'aqila while I was in the field. Their 'aqila had recently died and his office had not yet been filled. The person who •[666] would succeed to the office was known by all, but still his election or formal appointment did not take place. In other *613 554 578 words, the office of 'aqila will remain vacant until conflict and the need to regulate it force an election. The Bedouins were pleased about the vacant 'aqila office in Bait Braik: "Thank God that it is vacant. When it is necessary, we will meet and name an 'aqila." Any of the 'awaaqil of the lineage [682] can mediate conflict, but no 'aqila is willing to take the responsibility of collecting the blood-money from another man's bait.

order.

The 'aqila is elected by the elders of the secondary lineage group. The election usually takes place when these men are gathered for some festive occasion, such as a wedding. The name of the man chosen to succeed to the political office will not be made public until it is absolutely necessary, i.e., in the case of conflict within the man's bait, or more especially, in the case where blood-money is due. According to the Bedouins, the only qualification for the office of 'aqila is wisdom--the ability to arbitrate disputes. On the other hand, it is implicit that the 'aqila be a member of the "status group." Prestige commands respect and obedience, and prestige in al-Qasr usually comes with wealth. In general, the 'aqila is an elder, i.e., one with wisdom, and a member of a wealthy and influential family.

Technically, the 'aqila-ship is not inherited, but succession tends in this direction. An 'aqila must "speak the good and show men how to follow the path of the good." Not all men have the ability to do this, and, the Bedouins say, it is natural that such a great gift resides with a particular family "because the son learns from the father." All of the 'awaaqil in al-Qasr claim that they knew how to settle disputes before they became 'awaaqil. If they had not, they would not have been worthy of the office. Actually, the choice of an 'aqila is a restricted one: the office may pass, according to

the unilineal rule, only to the son or the brother of the former 'aqila. In Bait 'Umar, for instance, the office went from father to son to brother (see Figure 8). The election amounts to a choice between the son or the brother, and partiality is usually shown towards the eldest of the two candidates.

The 'aqila's term of office may be terminated by the members of the bait. Such an action may be the result of ineffectiveness due to old age, or it may stem from a violation of the norms of the office by the incumbent. Two cases of an 'aqila being impeached were reported to me. One, which did not take place in al-Qasr, was brought about when the 'aqila was accused of taking a bribe, and favoring one party to the conflict over the other. The second case, which happened about fifteen years ago in al-Qasr, involved an 'aqila from 'Ailit Ma'fas. This man informed Egyptian officials that his fellow tribesmen were storing guns and ammunition beyond the quantity permitted by national security laws. Not only was this man removed from his 'aqila-ship, but he was also expelled from his tertiary segment, and hence the tribe. But, in most cases, term of office is ended by death or senility. The Bedouins say: "An 'aqila will be removed if he can no longer solve problems; if he says bad things about his tribe; if he is too old, or too lazy; in other terms, if he is not a good man, he is removed."

634 shaikh are administrators, not executives, in the service of
554 the Governor and the "status group" of al-Qasr. Nevertheless,
[571] under the influence of the bureaucratic principle, as a new
[635] structural principle in Bedouin society, these offices could conceivably become seats of power.[4]

634 The 'umda and shaikh are described as "elective" offices
554 by the Bedouins but, in fact, they are appointive just like
● 666 the office of 'aqila. Theoretically, every man has a vote
571 but, actually, only the members of the "status group" vote. Paradoxically, perhaps, the Bedouins stress two major qualifications for these offices: the 'umda and the shaikh must be men "who know the needs of the Bedouin of the desert, and know how to talk to the Governor"; and, "they must be men who do nothing without the permission of the 'awaaqil (i.e. without the permission of the "status group" who elected the 'aqila in the first place).

634 The two offices are not equal in prestige and status
554 neither in the eyes of the Bedouins or of the Egyptians. The office of shaikh is the lesser office. It amounts to a clerical post, and the shaikh really functions as an assistant

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[635] [4] The Governor, who is of Bedouin origin, has already recognized this potential and has moved to eliminate the possibility of a more powerful 'umda representing a more powerful "status group." When I left the field, the Governor was in the process of drawing up new ground rules for electing the 'umda and the shaikh which would call for public elections on a "one man, one vote" basis.

634 554 to the 'umda. Both offices are for a life-term, only being terminated by bad behavior or senility. At the expiration 634 571 of an incumbent's term, the "status group" meets in al-Qasr to decide upon his replacement. The name of a "nominee" 635 •666 is passed on to the Governor who is expected to approve the Bedouins' selection of a representative to the government. [178] [177] It is this "status group"-controlled process which the Governor seeks to change. Since these are officially held offices in the U.A.R. governmental structure, he feels that elections to fill their vacancies should be a public affair. Naturally, he will exercise more influence over the naming of candidates in this way, and the Bedouins perceive this as a challenge to the traditional structure of leadership and control of external relations.

634 *613 666 [428] The offices of 'umda and shaikh are even more hereditary than that of 'aqila, which theoretically should not be the case. By definition, the role of 'aqila is functional at the bait level, and so the recruitment pool of candidates for this office is inherently limited. By comparison, the offices of 'umda and shaikh should go to the "best men" in the tribe, and, therefore, the recruitment pool should be 634 *613 666 tribal-wide. But, in fact, these two offices are considered "the property" of the wealthiest lineages in the al-Qasr area. There is a traditional rationale behind this fact: there is 428 the structural necessity for, and conscious practice of, an [57[]

634 asymmetrical power relationship between commoners and "status
*613 group" which maintains political order. The Bedouins say of
•666 the 'umda's office, as they did of the 'aqila, "if the son is
428 worthy of the office, then he should take his father's place."
[571] Such a statement is usually qualified by noting that if the son does not possess the qualifications of the office, of course, he will not succeed. This is not simply a case of power politics, there is more to it. Behind the inheritance of the 'umda and shaikh office is a logical concern and attempt to sustain a balance of political and social relations.

The "inheritance" of the 'aqila's office is explained by showing that the candidates for the office are limited to the brothers and sons of the incumbent, the former 'aqila. The offices of 'umda and shaikh, in contrast, have a recruitment pool which includes, potentially, every man at the primary tribal level, the 'Aishaibat. The rule of succession, where the modern legal roles are concerned, is a mechanism for maintaining, what is considered by most Bedouins to be, the legitimate distribution of power in al-Qasr. Once the roles
634 of 'umda and shaikh have been "captured" by a bait, for
*613 political power resides at the tertiary level of the lineage
666 structure, any attempt to change the distribution or locus
428 of power will be culturally transformed into a threat to the
578 honor, not of the individual, but of his bait and 'aiela. And this is a basis for conflict in Bedouin society. It is

634 no coincidence, then, that the present 'umda and shaikh are
*613 the sons of the former 'umda and shaikh. This reveals not
• 666 only the structural rules of succession, but also indicates
428 [578] that "social honor," and thus power, still resides with these
families.

It is important to note that since the time of their
[178] inception, these roles have not changed 'aiela or even bait
in al-Qasr. When the former 'umda from 'Ailit Lazumi died,
634 his eldest son petitioned to the 'awaaqil of the 'Aishaibat
*613 that he be approved to succeed to his father's position.
666 The 'awaaqil met and made their decision. One 'aqila who
428 was present at the election said: "The office of 'umda should
571 stay in the Lazumi family since the father was 'umda. The
'awaaqil agreed on the son. But the son will be accepted to
follow his father only if he is good. If he is not good, the
'awaaqil will find a new bait." Although the Bedouins speak
of "the 'awaaqil" electing the 'umda, it must be remembered
that it is the "status group" which makes the decision, and
that the 'awaaqil are only part of this group. The names of
[629] the men who elected the present 'umda include less 'awaaqil
and more rajal khair.

114 Before I arrived in the field, the present acting
634 'umda of the 'Aishaibat tribe was elected to the national
666 parliament to represent the province of Marsa Matruh. The
election of his replacement was not scheduled to take place

114 634 •666 until sometime after my departure from the field.[5] Nevertheless, before I left the field I discussed the pending election with some of my informants and members of the 114 634 "status group." The interviews reveal that the "status 666 group" still intends to dominate the area of power relations 124 829 with the government. As one informant said: "The present *[613] 'umda and the one before him were from Bait Bu Taram of 'Ailit Lazumi, and the next one will be from Bu Taram also."

634 571 666 The tenacity of traditional politics and the influence of the "status group" are reflected in the affairs surrounding the election of a new incumbent to the office of 'umda. In this situation, all Bedouins become concerned more with the distribution of power than with the actual person who will 124 *613 634 571 666 fill the authority role. One informant, an 'aqila, gave indication that formal authorities support the "status group" and the distribution of power which they represent and maintain.

> Mustafa, the brother of the 'umda, takes his place while he is in Cairo attending Parliament. The 'umda told me that he was going to ask the 'awaaqil to sacrifice (i.e. slaughter a lamb) and write a paper making Mustafa the new 'umda. (Here I told the informant that I had spoken with Mustafa about this, and he told me that he did not want to be the 'umda).
> Even if Mustafa does not want to be the 'umda, the 'awaaqil will force him to accept . . . It should remain in the same family, it would be a shame if the office went to another family. Mustafa's father and brother were 'umdas before him. If the office left the family,

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[5] Technically, the 'Aishaibat were without an 'umda while I was in the field. However, he spent enough time in Matruh that he was able to carry on his duties until his successor could be named.

124 If the office left the family,
*613 all of the lineages would be fighting over it . . . The
634 job should stay in Bait Bu Taram; if this is impossible,
571 then it should stay in 'Ailit Lazumi. In any case, the
*666 'awaaqil will decide.
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A change in the present locus of legal authority in
634 the Bedouin-Egyptian government structural relationship
178 would amount to a re-structuring process, and could lead to
121 serious conflict. In the very least, it would call for a clear explanation and new statement of social reality since it would challenge what is, and "has always been," a legitimate distribution of power and political order.

634 The office of the shaikh is not a potential power-
554 base by comparison with the office of 'umda. The shaikh, rather than being in direct communication with the Governor, executes the official orders made known to the 'umda. As an administrator, he takes care of issuing drivers' licenses, notifies men of their military draft status, etc. The government sees this as a necessary post because of the difficulty of contacting Bedouins deep in the desert. In one sense, the shaikh's office is becoming less functional as the Bedouin move in from the desert and begin to take part in the national society, but in another sense it is becoming more functional as bureaucracy and red tape become increasingly complex. But the shaikh remains in the shadow of the 'umda. He never substitutes for the 'umda, for this would infringe on the rightful power of the 'umda's family; when the 'umda is absent,

634 his brother sits in his place.
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The present shaikh is a member of 'Ailit Ma'fas, and
634 this is to offset the fact that the office of 'umda is in
*613 'Ailit Lazumi. It reflects the need to distribute official
554 power and to symbolize the real power structure. Historically, the Lazumi were more powerful than the Ma'fas. These two lineages are the largest, wealthiest, and most influential in al-Qasr and among the 'Aishaibat. When the present
*[666] shaikh's father decided to retire due to old age, he requested
[571] that his son be allowed to take up his role. The 'awaaqil of the 'Aishaibat in al-Qasr approved this "nomination" and
[556] the son was "elected." It is a fact that the shaikh's father is the richest man among the members of the 'Ailit Ma'fas and that the 'umda's father was the richest man of 'Ailit Lazumi.

571 Power groups tend to interact so as to enhance not
*613 the official authority structure but the political status quo
582 (Peters 1967:279). This explains a practice of the "status group" which Max Weber referred to as "connubism," the tendency of the members of this group to exchange women among themselves.
*613 In Figure 10,[1] the marriages of 'Ait Abd al-Malik of Bait 'Umar
582 of 'Ailit Ma'fas show that out of seventeen marriages only four of these were within the 'Aishaibat, and that three out of four of these marriages were with 'Ailit Lazumi. Even more impressive is the information obtained from considering

1. [See p. 132--Analyst]

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There is another objection which I have concerning our customs. I mean the case of elections. For instance, one from the 'Aishaibat and one from the Sanagra, of the 'Ali Abyad, are nominated. Then, each man must vote for the one from his own tribe. He must vote for the 'Aishaibi even if the other is the better man. But, we should consider that the best man is the man with the best qualifications. 'Umda Ibrahim, for instance, knows how to greet an official or a minister, but he does not know the 'awaiyid nor the problems of the Bedouins. His brother (who will probably be the next 'umda) is a good man and is educated, but he does not know the 'awaiyid either.

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This view contrasts sharply with the traditional stand of most Bedouins in al-Qasr, including the members of the "status group." For instance, one 'aqila voiced what is a prevalent opinion when he said:

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If a man chooses to become a political candidate against a Bedouin, he must understand that the members of the tribe should and would vote for their 'umda because he is a member of their own tribe. Even if a man is crazy and his opponent has the highest college degree, the Bedouins must vote for the man from their own tribe.

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Hajj 'Ali is modern in his evaluation of the political situation here: a politician should know the problems of his constituents rather than follow principles based on traditional relationships. His motive is not to promote the 'awaiyid as a good way of life, for we know he does not think this to be the case. Instead, Hajj 'Ali believes that in order to help the Bedouins through a period of change one must know what they are changing from. Through his negative appraisal of

634 The situation is quite different in the Western Desert. Although
666 it is the government, represented by the province council, which makes
659 the final decision in appointing the omda or sheikh, yet this appoint-
554 ment is made on the basis of nominations given by the gribal segment
619 or segments which he would represent. Since the tribal segment usually
635 nominates one person, the decision of the council is limited to the examination of the credentials of the nominee and to see if he meets the basic requirements of the law. If a certain nominee is rejected by the council, a very rare occurrence, the matter goes back to the tribal segment to make another nomination. In practice, then, the omda of the Western Desert is elected by the people and the appointment by the government of the omda is significant only in cases where the omda is to represent more than one small tribal segment and each nominates one. Here the council has to choose between the various nominaees and appoints the best
634 qualified. Unlike the omda of the village, the tribal omda is a real re-
554 presentative of his people. Despite the fact that he beccmes part of a
657 governmental structure, his basic function is to look after the interest
619 [622] of his tribal group. Or, as one informant put it, "The omda is the servant of the people." In many cases the best interest of the tribal segment is served through full cooperation of the omda with the government. So far there seems to be very little conflict between the interest of the tribal populations and that of the government. There is very little in
[651] the area that the government demands or needs. There is no taxable land to speak of. There are only a few acres of barley land and even these
634 are minimally taxed. The main responsibility of the omda to the govern-
554 ment is to report births and deaths and give a yearly list of young men
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634 government." But due to the nature of the representation and the spe-
554 cific relation of the government to the area, the position of the omda
657 does not pose serious demands upon the loyalty of the omda to his tribal
578 group.

634 Because of the omda's ability to bring benefits to his tribal seg-
554 ment from the government, the ability to manipulate the administrative
657 officials is the most important basis for the nomination of a given
666 individual for the position of the omda. "The omda is one who can speak city talk and knows how to deal with the government officials." Age is not important; young people know more about city ways than old people. "A man may be a cheat, but as long as he can get our things done, he is the best man for the job...of course, we don't want to nominate someone with a bad reputation who may blacken our face in front of everybody. However, if he has a bad reputation the council would not approve his appointment...he just has to be someone who can get things done..."

159 Muftah Mughaieb, the sheikh of the Sanagrah tribal segment in the
634 district of Haman, described the circumstances of his nomination as
554 follows:
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Before the former sheikh of that tribal segment died (he was Muftah's uncle), one member of the group got into an argument with the police officer in charge of the police station in the district. The tribesman insulted the police officer who insisted on arresting him. Rumors also had it that the police officer was using his authority to reduce the share of the tribal segment in the government aid which was badly needed during that particular year. Sheikh Muftah, whose father is the Aqila of

159 bait Mughaieb of the Sanagrah tribe, went to the officer and apol-
634 ogized to him on behalf of the whole group and invited him to a
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657 lavish dinner party. The charges against the tribesman were soon
666 dropped, and it was concluded that it was because of the way Muftah
[578] had handled the situation. Since that incident, Muftah has been
[625] known as an expert in handling the government officials. One year later, the sheikh of the tribal segment died, and a meeting was held during which the important members of the Sanagrah tribal segment in the district decided to nominate Muftah for the position of the sheikh, vacant by the death of his uncle. Muftah, who was attending the meeting, was asked to accept the nomination, and he agreed. "...I accepted the nomination reluctantly." Muftah later told me, "I did not really want to become the sheikh. The
159 position does not bring any personal benefit, and it involves a
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554 lot of responsibility. The sheikh has to act as an attorney for
657 his tribe, represent it to the government and competes with other sheikhs to bring his people things that the other sheikhs cannot get for theirs, like more membership in the cooperative units or in the socialist union. And what does he get in return? Nothing... not even the gratitude of his people. To them, he is a servant of the tribe, and his duty is to look after its interest. If he doesn't, then everybody is quick to criticize him. I had to accept the nomination because I felt it was my duty to do so and not to embarrass the awaqil and the important people of the tribe who
[465] put their confidence in me. As far as the government, all I get is six pounds a month."